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ABSTRACT

Both quantitative and qualitative procedures were used to analyze 39 responses to a questionnaire asking cooperating teachers, university preservice teachers, and public school administrators to identify problem areas of the teacher education field experience and to suggest strategies for improvements. The six field experience components which were considered to be most in need of revision included assignments, placement of university student with cooperating teacher, involvement of administrators, classroom planning by university students, conferencing with university supervisor, and orientation. The paper concluded that cooperating teachers desire to be more involved in the classroom planning of student teachers and to have more input in the assignments given to university students. There was a call for participation of the principal in the field experience of the preservice teacher. (JDD)

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When Teachers and Administrators are Asked: Improving Teacher Education Through Collaboration

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Abstract

The persons who are most directly affected by teacher education field experiences are not always asked to identify problems within those experiences and to help plan strategies to solve those problems. This study was developed to involve those persons in such a collaborative effort in order to generate possible new models for teacher education. As cited in the current literature, collaborative efforts provide a context where cooperating teachers can share their wisdom in the reformation of teacher education. Both quantitative and qualitative procedures were used to analyze the 39 responses received from a questionnaire asking cooperating teachers, university preservice teachers, and administrators to identify problem areas of the teacher education field experience and to suggest strategies for improvements. The data indicated that cooperating teacher desire to be more involved in the classroom planning of student teachers and to have more input in the assignments given to university students. Cooperating teachers, preservice teachers, and administrators alike suggested increased involvement of the building principal with the preservice teacher.

I. Introduction

Traditionally, public schools and universities have led separate lives. The way it should be versus the way it really is has led to a separation of the educational systems in the area where the two come together - the preparation of the next generation of teachers. Institutions of higher education have been accused of having an "ivory tower" mentality which has had little concept of the realities facing the classroom. Public schools have been viewed as places where survival and maintaining the status quo are the primary motivators (McNiece, James, & Broyles, 1992). Teacher education has often seen the theory of the university and the practice of the public school battle one another over preservice teacher training. The very cultures of the university and the public school differ in ways that impede efforts to reform teacher education (Goodman, 1988; Goodlad, 1990; McNiece et al., 1992).

To work in collaboration can mean to work with the enemy and this would seem an appropriate term to use to describe working relationships between these two institutions. However, a recent reform movement in education has called for a development of partnerships between university and public schools. Advocates of educational reform recommend that restructuring of the public school proceed simultaneously with new methods of teacher preparation, induction, and development (Holmes, 1986; Goodlad, 1990). Thus, efforts across the country have been made to bring the university and the public school into a collaborative relationship of shared responsibility for teacher education. The establishment of professional development schools is one attempt to involve the practitioner more heavily in the education and training of preservice teachers and provide professional growth opportunities for the veteran teacher. Many institutions of higher education, local public school systems, and state departments of education have

joined to form coalitions to better prepare and support the classroom teacher (Smith, 1992).

The necessity of building a cadre of well prepared teachers is undeniable as the problems and challenges of shaping America's educational system for the twenty-first century must now be faced. The working together of public schools and institutions of higher education, the collaboration with the enemy, is not only a logical approach to reforming teacher education, but is theoretically based on the cooperative understanding of learning and development. The persons involved with the field experience program of this study have had a fifteen year history of cooperation with a center coordinator from the university. The relationships of the university, the cooperating teachers, the university students, and the administrators of the public school are stable and genial. However, there is no shared responsibility for the content or the structure of the field experience program and the roles are traditionally assumed by all parties. The public school personnel willingly accommodate the requirements of the university.

The objectives of this study were threefold: (1) to identify the areas of teacher education field experiences in greatest need of revision according to those persons directly affected by the experience, (2) to identify and analyze proposed changes in the field experience in order to maximize learning experiences for public school pupils and their preservice teachers, and (3) to begin a discussion of collaboration and the benefits of shared responsibilities and changed roles in teacher education field experience.

II. Background

The teacher education field experience has been the traditional place to bring the preservice teacher into the practical world of the classroom, and although teacher education field experiences are seemingly universally accepted as necessary, they are not

universally accepted as accomplishing the goal of developing competent teachers (Salzillo & Van Fleet, 1977; Goodman, 1988; Westerman, 1989). The public school and the university have not viewed one another as partners. Therefore, theory that is taught in the professional courses at the university has often been in conflict with the methods and philosophy of the classroom. The development of the professional development school and the collaborative approach that is its essential element have been seen as a means to link the university and the public school and, therefore, link theory and practice (Winitzky, Stoddart, & O'Keefe, 1992; Dixon and Ishler,1992; Lieberman & Miller, 1990; Rushcamp and Roehler, 1992; Holmes, 1990).

Koerner (1992) examined the perceptions that cooperating teachers have about having student teachers. It was not surprising to find that there was a sense of confusion and frustration reported on the part of the cooperating teachers. The teachers felt the university often gave unclear directives and unstated, unspecific goals and that there was a lack of two-way communication prior to and during fields experiences. Their perception of the university was that it was indifferent to their problems and that they were not listened to. These teachers reported a need to have an equal voice in the teacher education field experience process. The collaborative efforts of the professional development school address some of the frustrations of these teachers. Moore et al., (1991) set out to determine what classroom teachers consider as the most important components of a professional development school and what classroom teachers view as the most important skills which need to be taught those persons working in professional development schools. Teachers were asked to rank as very important, important, of little importance, or not important given characteristics of professional development schools. In this study the authors received only confirmation of the components they suggested. The interesting part

of this study was in the generated responses of the need for training in classroom management by persons involved in professional development schools (frequency-9)and the desire for university professors to teach in the public schools on a regular basis (frequency-4).

Reform will only come if the collaborative efforts seen in the professional development schools bring benefits to the students and teachers involved in the programs. The research on the collaborative efforts of the professional development schools points to benefits to preservice teacher and the practicing teacher. The empowering of teachers as decision making professionals was an important aspect of the professional development school (Rikard & Beacham, 1992; Smith, 1992). Rushcamp & Roehler (1992) reported that the shifting of roles and responsibilities of decision making increased during the year they study Crescentville School. Although all programs studied were by design different, all called for a reflection on teaching as a profession and on teaching practices. This reflective teaching had positive effects on both preservice and practicing teacher (Koerner, 1992; Rikard & Beacham, 1992; Rushcamp & Roehler, 1992).

There are many programs in existence, but there are also many barriers to developing collaboration, for the culture of the university makes working within the framework of the public schools difficult. The academic reward system of the university does not normally recognize contribution of working with the public school. Faculty of universities have traditionally had academic freedom to design their courses and collaborating with outsiders is not part of the customary way of doing things (Goodman, 1990; Winitsky et al. 1990). Historic tensions, concern for underlying motives, and commitment to old ideas are part of the embedded forces that make for an uneasy relationship between institutions of higher education and the public school (McNiece et al.

1992). Obstacles to the development of collaborative efforts included lack or loss of funding (Smith, 1992; Moore et al. 1991), lack of administrative support (Smith, 1992), lack of shared understandings and role conflicts (Rushcamp & Roehler, 1992).

Certain factors emerged that supported the development of collaborative teacher education programs, and obstacles were found that hindered their development. Findings reported a need for participants of collaborative programs to share in a common purpose and in responsibility and commitment (Clemson, 1990; Rushcamp & Roehler, 1992; Smith, 1992). A need to have mutual trust between and benefits to all parties of the partnership was shown (Clemson, 1990;Smith, 1992). The acknowledgment of the complexities and importance of the classroom and the recognition of the continual state of change in the program were important factors in the programs (Rushcamp & Roehler, 1992; Smith, 1992). An understanding of the collaborative professional development schools that are functioning and the realization of the barriers that inhibit collaborative relationships may help facilitate the process of developing collaborative relationships. However, Lieberman, Saxl, and Miles (1988) state that collaboration is a process and outcome that ".. does not come just as a natural sequence of working together. It must be taught, learned, nurtured, and supported until it replaces working privately" (p. 152). Research is lacking in examples of carefully crafted agreements of collaboration (Goodlad, 1988). Just how successful programs overcame the barriers and evolved into productive programs is unclear. Having democratic governance and structure, long-term commitments, sharing of resources, and creation of new roles is helpful but not sufficient. A new institution must be invented to join together the university and the public school (Winitsky et al. 1992).

Theoretical framework

Collaborative relationships can be built between institutions of higher education and the public schools if a means can be found to ensure that participants have parity in roles and responsibilities (Rushcamp and Roehler, 1992; Lieberman and Miller, 1990), if a common purpose is agreed upon by all parties, if incentives are found that appeal to all participants, if the focus of change is built upon the strengths of the participants (Clemson, 1990), and if support is given from all hierarchical levels of both the university and the public school (Winitsky et al., 1992; Smith, 1992). The critical assumption of change is that it must must involve the stake holders. All persons must have important roles of leadership. There must be a clear understanding that leadership and position are not synomous (McNiece et al., 1992). For collaboration to move beyond the theoretical stage, a discussion between and among university personnel and public school personnel to jointly determine areas of common interest and concern must be initiated. Only then, collaborative programs that recognize the work and interest of all concerned parties can successfully be developed (Goodlad, 1990).

Procedures:

An anonymous questionnaire listing fifteen components considered common to all field experiences were mailed to the cooperating teachers, the university teacher education students who have participated in a field experience, and the administrators involved with these students and teachers during the past two years in a small midwestern public school system. The fifteen components were: 1. Orientation of university students (Orientation); 2. Assignments given university students (Assignments); 3. Phase In of Involvement of university students (Phase-in); 4. Classroom planning by university students (Planning); 5. Classroom teaching by university students (Teaching); 6. Pupil evaluation by university

students (Pupil evaluation); 7. Observations by university students (Observation by); 8. Self-evaluation by university students (Self-evaluation); 9. Involvement of Administrators (Administrators); 10. Conferencing with university supervisor (Conferencing); 11. Feedback given university student by cooperating teacher (Feedback); 12. Observation of university student (Observation of); 13. Modeling of teaching behaviors by cooperating teacher (CT Modeling); 14. Placement of university student with cooperating teacher (Placement); and 15. Evaluation of university students (Evaluation). All participants of the study were asked to choose five of the components that they felt were in need of revision for the early field experience students (EFE) and then five of the components that they felt were in need of revision for the student teacher experience (ST). They, then, were to prioritize these five problem areas and to make a suggestion as to ways to revise or improve each of the five. An open-ended question was also posed to allow for feedback in areas not covered by the questionnaire.

Responses were received from 21 of the 61 public school teachers who have been cooperating teachers, 14 of the 61 teacher education students, and 4 of 9 public school administrators. A total of 39 questionnaires were received and analyzed. Analysis consisted of counting the number of times a component was reported as an area in need of revision and categorizing this information by the total markings (Total), the responses made on consideration of the early field experience (EFE), the responses made on consideration of student teaching (ST), the responses of the cooperating teachers (CTs), and the responses of the university students (Students). The responses of the administrators were not included as none of the four who responded ranked the components as instructed.. Further analysis looked for themes and patterns of comments made in the suggestion area of the questionnaire and for key phrases and suggestions which were

frequently repeated. Consideration was, also, given to unusual suggestions or comments that were considerated particularly pertinent to the improvement of the field experience program.

Findings:

As reported in Table I, the respondents identified the following six field experience components which they considered most in need of revision: (1) Assignments, (2) Placement, (3) Administrators, (4) Planning, (5) Conferencing-U, and (6) Orientation. Those areas of least concern and need of revision were: observation of university students, observation by university students, phase-in, and feedback.

Table I.
Field Experience Components Most Needing Revision

Components	Concerns of:				
	Total	EFE	ST	CTs	Students
Orientation	17	10	7	12	3
Assignments	23	17	6	13	10
Phase-In	10	4	6	7	3
Planning	19	10	9	15	4
Teaching	15	8	7	11	3
Pupil evaluation	14	8	6	11	3
Observation by	10	7	3	5	6
Self-evaluation	11	5	6	8	3
Administrators	19	9	10	12	6
Conferencing	18	10	8	13	3
Feedback	10	6	4	5	5
Observation of	5	2	3	4	1
CT modeling	11	6	5	5	4
Placements	20	12	8	12	6
Evaluation	11	5	6	7	4

When responses were categorized by early field experiences and student teaching, and by teachers, and by university students responses differed as reported in Table II.

Table II.
Field Experience Component Concerns Rankings

	Areas of concern expressed about: EARLY FIELD EXPERIENCE	STUDENT TEACHING
Concerns of:		
COOPERATING TEACHERS	Assignments	Classroom planning
	Classroom planning	Administrators
	Conferencing with Center Coord.	Placement
	Orientation to public schools	Classroom teaching
	Pupil evaluation	Orientation
	Administrators	Self-evaluation
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS	Assignments	Administrators
	Administrators	C.T. modeling
	Observations by	Phase in
	Feedback	Evaluation of

An analysis of the suggestions given by cooperating teachers indicated some concerns that did not show up on the ranking scales. A stronger concern with the role of the administrator than was indicated by the rankings was one of those. Of the 16 teachers who made written responses, 7 suggested increasing the amount of involvement the building principal has with university students. The suggestions ranged from having the principal conduct building orientation to having the principal participate in evaluation of the student teacher.

The cooperating teachers expressed a desire to have an input in the assignments given to the university students so as to make them more relevant and a desire to be more involved with the classroom planning of the student teacher. Recommendations in regard to observations centered around providing more opportunities to watch different teachers and for extended observation periods. Comments concerning the placement of students with competent cooperating teachers and concern with the ability of the students to

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adequately evaluate pupils were mentioned on multiple responses. Comments suggesting that student teachers give feedback to cooperating teachers as to their teaching behaviors were found on two of the cooperating teachers' responses, as were suggestions from the cooperating teacher that there was a need for more feedback to be given the students teacher by the cooperating teacher.

The suggestions given by the university education students were focused on making the assignments of the early field experience more relevant. Nine of eleven responses that included suggestions or comments addressed the issue of course assignment. The students also expressed a desire for more involvement with the building principal, more and varied opportunities to observe other teachers, and guidelines for pupil evaluation. Students were concerned that their placement in the schools be with innovative teachers and expressed a desire to have input in their placement.

Each administrator focused his or her comments in a different manner. One response made three suggestions but all centered around the desire of that administrator to have input as to the selection of the cooperating teachers. Another response indicated a desire to be more actively involved with the preservice teachers and to receive feedback as to their work and progress. A third response asked to meet with the preservice teacher prior to the first day of their field experience and expressed a concern that student teachers were taking over the classroom too early. One admininstrator and three cooperating teachers responded that the program was doing an excellent job preparing future teachers and that they saw no need of revision.

Discussion and Implications:

The university and the public schools in this study had a cooperative relationship and there had been no immediate call for a revision of the program provided by the

university center coordinator. However,the benefits of moving from a cooperative to a more collaborative relationship had been expressed by participants in the program. There had been discussion of changing the roles and responsibilites in the teacher education program in order to maximize learning experience for public school pupils and for the preservice teachers they encounter.

While the participants in this study were from one teacher education center at one university, the findings suggest a willingness on the part of the participants in the current program to share their concerns and offer suggestions for improving teacher education field experiences. Though the findings speak to each of this study's objectives in a parochial sense, they also confirm the findings of Koerner (1992), Rikard & Beacham (1992), and Rushcamp & Roehler (1992) regarding the desire of the practicing teacher to have a voice in the decision making process of teacher education. Most importantly, these findings suggest the potential for developing increased collaborative roles and responsibilities at this teacher education site and they suggest potential areas of concern for other programs attempting to develop more collaborative programs.

For objectives one and two, the authors concluded that while differences existed between cooperating teachers' and preservice teachers' responses and the limited administrators' responses for both early field experiences and student teaching, the most common thread of the response was desire for more involvement by the public school personnel. The principal was seen as a missing element in the program now and there was a call for participation of the principal in the field experience of the preservice teacher. Cooperating teachers expressed a desire to be more involved in the assignments and planning of the preservice teacher. Cooperating teachers and administrators related a need to have more conferencing with the university supervisor. Preservice teachers suggested

increased relevancy between campus assignments and field experiences and more feedback and information from administrators and innovative cooperative teaching models.

For objective three, it was concluded that participation in this study demonstrated a desire for increased collaboration involving all participants in teacher education field experiences at this teacher education center.. These findings and conclusions suggest that the cultural differences referred to by Goodlad (1990) and McNiece et al. (1992) can be addressed through a collaborative process that will facilitate the simultaneous restructuring of public schooling and teacher education recommended by Goodlad (1990) and The Holmes Group (1986). They infer the need for development of mechanisms and structures for on-going collaborative communication and contextual implementation of teacher education community decisions. By approaching the revision of the field experience in a problem solving mode and involving the persons who hold the greatest stake in the process the adaptation will follow current trends of giving the practicing teacher a greater say in the training of future teachers.

A questionnaire such as the one used in this study is recommended as an initial step toward developing collaboration. It can provide a means to begin the development of parity of roles and responsibilities, to help university and public school personnel find a common purpose, to discover means of providing incentives to those with additional responsibilities, to determine the focus of the collaboration, and to gain the support of all personnel. Collaborative programs are not new to teacher education, but what is missing is information about the initiation or maintenance of these programs. Goodlad (1988) concluded, "The history of school-university collaboration is not so much, then, replete with failure as it is short on examples of carefully crafted agreements and programs..."(p.12). This questionnaire is a beginning. The development of collaboration

between the university and the public schools of this study is in its infancy. The next step planned is to convene focus groups of teachers, administrators, and university personnel in order to identify common goals and strategies. The hope of the authors is that this initial step ignites an interest and a desire of the educational community at this site to grow into a collaborative arrangement that will provide the maximum learning experience for all students in the educational setting. It is offered here as a possible example for other parties interested in changing the roles and responsibilities of teacher education.

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